

CANADIAN URBAN INSTITUTE

Dialogue on Urban Issues

**A Series of Discussions with
Prominent Speakers on Current
Urban Policy Issues**



Urban Focus Series 91-2

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1 Introduction

The Canadian Urban Institute has as one of its goals the fostering of ongoing dialogue among knowledgeable Canadians on how to deal with the challenges facing our major urban centres. In keeping with this goal, the Institute has initiated a series of breakfast seminars. Our aim was to ensure that a number of decision-makers and others interested in urban issues an opportunity in informal surroundings to hear the views of prominent speakers on urban issues and to engage directly in discussion with them.

Because of our location in Toronto, the audience has largely been made up of people from the Greater Toronto Area. As can be seen from the list of participants at the back of this publication, they have consisted of locally elected officials, senior provincial and local staff, academics, consultants, and representatives of other private and public organizations interested in urban affairs.

The speakers and topics were chosen to reflect both pressing issues in the Greater Toronto Area and issues of more universal concern. The future of the Greater Toronto Area was reviewed from the perspective of the Ontario government by the Honourable Ruth Grier, Minister of the Environment and Minister Responsible for the Greater Toronto Area, and from the perspective of a rapidly growing municipality in the region by the Mayor of Mississauga, Hazel McCallion. One of the greatest challenges facing Metropolitan Toronto and other large cities in Canada - the rapid rise in demand for social and community services - was described by Don Richmond, Metro Toronto's Commissioner of Community Services. A world perspective on some of the most profound issues of the 1990s was provided by Jeb Brugmann, Secretary-General of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), a body established in 1990 at a UN-sponsored conference whose headquarters will move to Toronto in the autumn of 1991. Finally, Ontario participants were given an opportunity to discuss the changing urban picture in Quebec after two stimulating presentations by Robert Cournoyer, Director of Policy and Research of the Quebec Ministry of Municipal Affairs, and by Serge Carreau, associate director of Housing Urban Development of the City of Montreal.

This publication consists of summaries of the presentations of the various speakers and of the ensuing discussions.

The Canadian Urban Institute will be continuing its breakfast seminars as a contribution to the better understanding of urban issues in Canada. The seminars themselves will continue to alternate between locations in the cities of Toronto and North York but it is hoped that, through this publication, others across Canada can be brought into the dialogue.

The seminars series are organized by Don Stevenson, consulting associate at the CUI. Other Canadian Urban Institute. Other CUI staff involved with the seminars have been Cheryll Kwok, Beverly Kowbel, Sandy Hutchful, Engin Isin and Mieke Smulders.

Richard Gilbert

President

2 Challenges for the Greater Toronto Area

A Presentation by The Honourable Ruth Grier, Minister of the Environment and Minister Responsible for the Greater Toronto Area, April 5, 1991

Ruth Grier began her remarks by welcoming this opportunity to shift discussion about the GTA beyond solid waste management, and on to the larger issue of linkages between the municipal and provincial levels of government. The following paraphrases her comments:

The last election is evidence that people here are ready for change. But no one knows what needs to happen. I have come to the conclusion that we need a collective recognition of what the GTA is and what must be done. This recognition must be arrived at jointly by many players. With that goal in mind, I want to provide some thoughts on the GTA to generate discussion.

There is growing awareness at all levels of government of the broad coordination implicit in the GTA, but there is as yet no public awareness of the GTA, its works, and of the need to make changes in the way we make decisions. The critical indicators are slipping. We're all looking at mistakes made in other cities, and are prepared to make changes—if we can reach consensus on what changes are needed. It's not too late. We mustn't accept what other cities have settled for.

The IBI Urban Structure Concepts study identified many of the problems. It's now quite clear there are fundamental problems that require a cooperative response. To achieve that we need a clear statement of values, goals and objectives. We need general acceptance of what we should get on with, and who should get on with it. It's the buying in that makes things happen. We must have common principles upon which to proceed, quickly or it will be too late.

What are the barriers to establishing a new vision for the GTA community? I see four:

- ◆ Changes in the economy. We must recognize the loss of manufacturing, the global flight of capital, the short-sighted monetary policies of senior governments. Tighter times require we do things differently, but also make buy-in to change more difficult.
- ◆ Past lack of attention to the natural environment. People expect action.
- ◆ Lack of investment in infrastructure. Catch-up is required.
- ◆ Changing demographic make-up. It's time to go back to earlier study recommendations and see why they have not been implemented successfully. Cultural diversity must be seen as a resource not a barrier.

When does a city cease to be a good place to live? When does it become a place that is stressed? It's hard to tell, but it seems to me that we are approaching that. Angry motorists honking. Shopping as a recreation, and complaints that shopping is the only thing to do on Sundays. Uncertainty about the quality of drinking water and the safety of parks. Lack of confidence.

Do we accept all this as the inevitable? I don't think so, but it's easy to be overwhelmed.

If you act locally, but in cooperation with other levels and sectors, things can happen. The Harbourfront Commission is an example. Negotiating watershed planning issues may pilot a collaborative way of breaking logjams.

To start, we need vision. We don't have that yet, and it should be the product of much discussion. I see three key value areas:

- ◆ Equity: equal access to information, opportunities for participation, personal security in the streets;
- ◆ Employment and the economy: meaningful work and opportunities for training, assurance to employers of an energetic and trained workforce, consistency across governments, cooperation between governments; and
- ◆ Environmental protection, remediation, and appropriate new growth. We need a broad, multi-media approach, involving water, air, land and the built environment. The

Crombie report expresses this well as an ecosystem approach.

Also, we must consider variety in the built form, we must stimulate innovation. The IBI Urban Structure Concepts study says urban sprawl cannot continue, but the methods for change are not yet well understood or accepted.

The work I see ahead for the provincial government? The key areas for me are:

- ◆ greening the planning process;
- ◆ including the community in the process;
- ◆ finding a new approach to infrastructure planning and funding strategy;
- ◆ reforming relations between the municipal and provincial governments; and
- ◆ the creation of social planning mechanisms that are integrated with those for environmental and economic planning.

Discussion

How can we make this happen?

In response, Ruth Grier suggested that participation must be bottom up, as well as top down. In her community it has proven difficult to get anyone from education to participate in the larger forums. And while she supports the development of expertise within the GTA, she does not want to build a huge organization.

Moving back to the larger picture, next came a call for a top-down institutional solution: "There is great resistance, strong fiefdoms. Consultation will dig you into a deeper hole. We need action from the senior level, an institutional solution, with consultation to work out the details. The Province must work out how it intends to act. Set government structure and taxing power, and the rest falls out."

Not so easy, said another. Parallel to the GTA issue is the need for a general realignment across levels, disentanglement: "We may not solve GTA problems until we resolve the provincial-municipal relationship."

"True," another replied, "that underpins everything that has to happen. But previous attempts to look at the financial structure were not consummated, and this one may not be either. We can't wait. We could lose the opportunity."

Ruth Grier was then asked whether she was contemplating some parallel to the Crombie Commission's broad ecosystem approach for the GTA.

She responded that the approach was attractive, but implementation remains problematic. "The waterfront trail", for example, "will only be successful if local municipalities make it happen, and that will happen because of mass support. The more contentious issues are more difficult. I'm not sure implementation will work if the solution is imposed."

This prompted a participant to observe that while certainly some implementation problems have been the fault of planners, some do reflect provincial reluctance to take action. For example, to freeze land from development.

To which the Minister replied, the power is there, but if exercised without buy-in, it inevitably results in an issue by issue fight at the OMB. "We're groping for a better way."

At this point, a participant suggested we look at the framework that emerged at last fall's Canadian Urban Institute regional planning seminar: "State values and priorities, put that in front of people as a direction, and then put the onus back on municipalities to work out the details, with the Province taking initiatives in problem areas." Buy-in, he added, is vital. "But that there is already buy-in on many principles. It's a matter of getting those principles out, in readable form."

Richard Gilbert, President of the Canadian Urban Institute, then invited a more applied consideration of the issues. The planning crisis, he suggested, is in part typical of cities as they go.

The workshop closed with three further statements.

One person recalled that many people at the fall Regional Planning conference were impressed with the German system, in which the decentralization of services is contingent upon buy-into policies a level

up. Delivery, and appropriate taxing power, is the local and regional level, given acceptance of the larger framework.

Another argues for some clarity of process. The provincial government should look at the Urban Structure Concepts study, provide some analysis, and set out values and a framework with the major issues, expressed in a way that invites response. Perhaps as a Green Paper. And the boundaries of the game must be made clear. Are political structures and funding arrangements on the table? "The sleeper is disentanglement. Who takes the heat, who must make decisions where programs are cross-funded?... We need to collapse some of the funding/authority frameworks into identifiable structures."

Discussion ended with a plea for finality. Government processes are generally endless. That's no longer good enough. "The public must know that a time and place comes where a final decision has been made."



3

Cities and Environment

A Presentation by Jeb Brugmann, Secretary General of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), April 19, 1991

Richard Gilbert opened this second session in the Canadian Urban Institute's (CUI) breakfast seminar series. He said that these breakfast meetings are an opportunity for senior public officials and interested individuals from the private and other sectors to meet and discuss important urban issues in an informal setting. He informed the participants that while notes of the proceedings would be published, only the guest speaker would be attributed.

Gilbert then introduced Jeb Brugmann who will be moving, with the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), to Toronto in late summer. ICLEI is a municipal voice at the United Nations. Jeb Brugmann has a bachelor of economics from the University of Massachusetts and a master of public administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. In 1983, he became Director of the City of Cambridge Commission on Peace Education and Nuclear Disarmament. In his capacity of Director of Field Programs for the Center for Innovative Diplomacy in Cambridge Massachusetts he served as international relations consultant to various cities. ICLEI was Jeb's "brainchild", evolving from meetings he organized one year ago at the United Nations, where representatives of municipal governments from 42 countries decided to form ICLEI. From that initial meeting, an interim committee was appointed to find a location for the offices of ICLEI. Toronto, among 15 other cities, bid and was subsequently chosen as the site for the Council's headquarters.

Mr. Gilbert called Jeb Brugmann, Secretary General of ICLEI, one of the best "political organizers" he has ever met.

Mr. Brugmann said that he would direct his remarks to the philosophy behind ICLEI. ICLEI came to Toronto in order to work with the local community and to help establish a model of an environmentally well-managed community, not merely to occupy an office at City Hall.

Two key concepts have emerged from ICLEI's early work. One that looks to those problems of the environment attributable to the overall management of human settlements. It considers broad problems, similar to those of the upcoming 1992 Earth Summit Conference in Brazil, such as pollution of the seas, the air, and waste management. Using this concept alone however, often leads to inadequate solutions. In the case of deforestation, for example, which is seen as destroying the environment, accommodations must be worked out for those people that depend on the resource. Global warming is largely the result of overdevelopment in developed countries and is also something that ICLEI hopes to convince the international community to do something about.

The second concept recognizes that ultimately resolutions to environmental problems will depend on what local authorities do. The international community is floundering because of conflicts on environmental issues between north and south. The international community cannot remove itself from the need to accommodate both economic growth and environmental protection. Currently the Earth Summit excludes municipalities. ICLEI is now trying to fill the gap between local communities and international organizations dealing with the environment.

ICLEI is now trying to operationalize the concept of sustainable development.

ICLEI uses the concept of the urban ecosystem, which is an inclusive system, similar in concept to the work done by the Crombie Royal Commission on the Toronto Waterfront. ICLEI can then act as an intermediary between the environmentalists and those responsible for development. The health of the species is necessarily integral to the higher ecological system. ICLEI's objective is to enhance and optimize the health of the ecosystem through public policy and action.

ICLEI's activities will include researching the characteristics of the ecosystem and understanding the role of cities as part of the ecosystem. Urban characteristics are as important to the environment as forests and oceans. All have a large role in the greater system. We have to train municipal officials to use an ecosystems approach.

ICLEI's objectives are:

- ◆ To understand the management of the ecosystem.
- ◆ To educate the population, not just those who live in cities, but all people in the ecosystem.

- ◆ To protect ecosystems from stresses that threaten ecological health. A healthy ecosystem should be robust, stable and persistent.
- ◆ To enhance ecosystems through public policy and programs.

Brugmann said that it was essential to take a full systems approach by recognizing the interdependencies between issues. A healthy urban ecosystem depends on a healthy population. Poverty in Rio de Janeiro, for example, is connected to the erosion problem. Water supply cannot be divided from water treatment. In Sao Paulo, as in many other cities in the developing world, different entities were responsible for water supply and for sanitation. Water there was delivered before sewage systems were installed. As a result, the sewage contaminated the water supply. Quito, Ecuador, on the other hand, is a good example of a city using a full systems approach to environmental issues.

He said that it was important to tailor solutions to local problems and use informal local practices when they are useful. One of the problems in the developing countries in the past has been a tendency to import solutions rather than look to local resources. He cited the example of Bandung Indonesia where scavengers are an integral part of the solution to waste management issues (later a participant noted that there was a private waste management company in San Francisco named "Scavenger"!). Similarly he said that a "jitney" system of private minivans has provided a better solution to the need for mass transit in Dade County around Miami than the public transit system. Brugmann said that in both these cases the public authorities first tried to squelch the informal activities, before finally realizing that they were an invaluable part of the overall solution. He stressed that each ecosystem was unique and should be managed by those most familiar with it.

Brugmann said that more creative solutions to environmental problems can often result from decentralizing responsibility. The Mexican federal government turned over the responsibility for fighting pollution to Mexico City in 1986. The city immediately embarked on a 20 point program with a number of creative initiatives including obligatory use by residents of public transit rather than cars for one day a week, and by the reestablishment of forests around the city. As a result of these initiatives pollution in the city has been reduced by 18 per cent.

In Curitiba Brazil the decision was made twenty years ago to plan for growth. The city, by addressing the tie between urban development and transit planning, is now a healthy, vital urban community of 1.6

million. By looking at an overview of the city, one can see that it is divided along five major axes with high density development along each. Growth is along the major transportation routes. Each axis is divided into three main arteries: bus and light rail on one, a route to deliver to business on another, and finally, actual highways. Seventy per cent of the population uses public transit.

The aim of ICLEI is to work with at least one community on each continent that could be considered a "model" city for environmental programs. ICLEI will help establish for each community a training curriculum for ecosystem management. Within each community, there should be an in-house environmental counsellor who can advise the municipality on in-house, inter-departmental, environmental issues. ICLEI's investment in the eco-counsellors will be to train them, bring them together to exchange information and ideas, and help them to network. ICLEI will be a decentralized organization using the resources of its membership. The local people who work in transportation, waste management, and other environmental issues will become the ICLEI resource experts.

Discussion

The discussion began by Brugmann answering a question about his impressions of the Crombie report and the planning studies done for the GTA, in the context of an eco-systems approach. He said he thought that good work had been done on concepts in the Toronto area, but the current challenge was to integrate these concepts with plans and decisions for action.

A question was asked about ways of dealing with environmental issues when the institutions and municipalities responsible for action were based upon different geographic and economic scales than the urban ecosystem. Brugmann responded that a super-government should not be necessary, but a management system that covered the entire ecosystem was essential. There must necessarily be heavy interaction between agencies, but individual program areas like transportation and water can be planned and delivered at different geographic scales.

A participant used the example of labour market planning where attempts to coordinate the activities of agencies of different levels of government operating at different geographic scales ended up as an exercise in centralizing power. He wondered how "politically realistic" the office of environmental counsellor would be, given the demands of decision-making.

Jeb Brugmann responded by saying that if an overall ecosystems approach is used, operations and detailed decision-making can be decentralized. The key is to use an ecosystems approach in deciding on overall priorities. A decision to establish district heating and cooling systems and the recycling of energy resources can follow from an ecosystems approach. No structural change may be required nor does there need to be much subsequent change in the decision-making process. In Curitiba, there was no change in the structure of the planning department, but the local community was heavily involved in the planning process. In the Toronto situation, it would just mean that planning departments should look at issues from the perspective of an ecosystems approach.

A participant commented that there were two types of decentralization—to a point lower in the hierarchy, and, often more important in the third world, from government to non-governmental organizations. When the local community is ignored in the planning of a new project, problems develop.

Brugmann responded that it was important to use non-governmental organizations as a creative resource in the policy-making process. He noted that some environmental issues require a centralizing of activity rather than decentralization. He cited the example of the central air district for southern California which oversees air quality in an area comprising 170 municipalities. Although San Diego and the other municipalities affect air quality in the ecosystem, it makes no sense to have separate municipal air quality organizations. Once again, Brugmann stressed that jurisdictional structures did not need to change to conform with ecosystems boundaries as long as existing jurisdictions used the same set of principles in their decision-making.

A participant suggested that a major problem was that third world cities wanted to become like first world cities, which could lead to disaster for the world ecosystem. He suggested that a better strategy is to reduce the damage to the ecosystem caused by first world cities rather than making third world cities more like them.

Brugmann replied that humanitarian issues must be dealt with as much as ecological issues. Many global problems result directly from desperate people trying to survive.

Environmental projects cannot be successful without developing healthy third world communities, with all of humanity living healthy lives. Otherwise, there is large scale starvation and death, plus the destruction of the ecosystem. In Africa, for example, it is not possible to protect the environment without addressing poverty. Both under-

development and over-development have devastating effects on the environment.

A participant suggested that the dilemma was whether we focus on Rio's local environmental damage or on the global damage that results from the urban sprawl of Chicago or Greater Toronto? Jeb Brugmann responded that the problem lies in the mismanagement of local ecosystems. Global solutions lie in the management of local ecosystems.

A participant asked about the role of professional management associations in ICLEI's plans. Jeb Brugmann replied that ICLEI could provide the curriculum to train public managers to apply ecosystems management approaches to existing problems.

A participant added that the provision of water and sewer services in the Toronto area is a success story because Metro, local municipal governments and the Ontario government agreed on a comprehensive approach. It was not necessary to establish a new level of government.

Another participant said that there was a recognition in the Metro area of the need for long-term approaches to environmental issues such as the desirability of oversized pipe to accommodate future growth. The problem was that the lengthy environmental hearing processes gave an opportunity for many objectors to block and delay projects to the extent that short-term stopgaps were constantly needed.

Brugmann suggested that the NIMBY syndrome needed to be faced by educating the public on the needs of the ecosystem. He added that facilities should be built in the context of the needs of the ecosystem, while retaining sufficient flexibility to deal with short-term issues.

Another participant said that there are political realities of the ecosystems approach that need to be considered. What happens to an ecosystems approach in a recession, for example? Within Ontario there are many municipalities trying to get industry back because their economies have suffered from plant shut-downs. How long will they listen to an ecosystems approach, when their reality is trying to attract jobs?

Jeb Brugmann replied that an ecosystems approach is inclusive and must include the objective of gainful employment. The environmentalists have to realize that the vitality of all humans is part of the ecosystem, so that with 20 per cent unemployment part of that vitality is lost. Acid rain coming from a steel mill produces a similar type of conflict. But these conflicts need to be moved onto an environmental agenda. Development needs to become more sensitive to the environment.

A participant raised two current Canadian examples of such conflicts. One was the recent provincial decision not to allow the export of Toronto's garbage. The other is the James Bay project in Quebec that will supply energy to Ontario, Quebec and parts of the United States, but at the expense of the indigenous persons living in the area.

Jeb Brugmann in response suggested that we needed to reduce our dependence on energy and our production of waste. By looking to an ecosystems approach we can ask how would it be possible to generate more energy. How to produce more necessarily hinges on wasting less. We should examine ways to re-cycle energy already within the system. While not aiming for total self-sufficiency in waste disposal or energy production, we should attempt to minimize the exporting of our problems.

A participant stated that business, government, and NGOs share responsibility for the economy *and* for the environment. She suggested that it becomes the responsibility of environmentalists from every sector to suggest new methods of implementing the principles of an ecosystems approach. The next step then becomes how to motivate business and/or government to change.

Brugmann replied that the best motivator is public pressure and greater public knowledge of ecological needs. For example, ICLEI has urged local councillors and local governments to take steps to reduce CFCs. Irvine, California, with a population of 110,000, produced the most CFCs in the world. A 46 per cent reduction in the production of CFCs resulted from public pressure and a partnership of local leaders in the context of an ecosystems approach.

Another participant added that within any Western democratic political system, the problems that an ecosystems approach would likely run into would be of both a political and a practical nature. Because the ecosystem normally covers a geographic area larger than municipal governments charged with implementation, local solutions often get overturned by higher levels of government with no realistic alternative being proposed. The trick is to have broad policy analysis done and principles set at a higher level of government than the one responsible for implementation.

Another participant added that generally, the buck gets continually passed down from the higher level of government to municipalities that cannot afford it. We need to have the private sector involved in front end funding of new or expanded public services. We also need pricing for municipal services like water that will encourage conservation. How do you weave these kinds of things into the management and training of eco-counsellors?

Jeb Brugmann replied that private sector and public groups need to meet in order to generate successful solutions, like creating larger markets. In Southern Arizona for example where recycled paper was found to be too expensive for individual firms, a purchasing co-op was formed to help create a new market for recycled paper. Production and marketing initiatives like these help take research and development to the production phase.

A participant commented that Crombie is attempting to raise the ecological system to a new, higher level. The result is a new ideology, which elevates ecosystemology to the status of a religion. There is an equally strong contradiction between environmentalists and the ecosystem approach. Environmentalists seem to be NIMBYists.

Jeb Brugmann answered that no ideology had as yet been formed and that ICLEI's approach will be pragmatic. He stressed that we need to get beyond the debate of the environmentalists versus development. All is currently in a state of flux. He appealed to the audience for assistance in breaking log-jams.

Don Stevenson of the Canadian Urban Institute, in closing the session, welcomed Jeb Brugmann and ICLEI to Toronto and to Ontario. He expressed the hope that the Toronto area would live up to the status of an ICLEI model environmental community. He suggested that the audience formed part of the nucleus of a network for ICLEI's work in the Toronto area. He then thanked Jeb Brugmann on behalf of the Canadian Urban Institute and the various agencies and individuals represented in the audience.

4 Social and Community Services: Who's in Charge? Who Should Be?

**A Presentation by Don Richmond, Commissioner of
Community Services of Metropolitan Toronto, May 3, 1991**

Don Stevenson opened the third session of the Canadian Urban Institute's breakfast seminar series. He said that the seminars were creating a network of informed people on urban issues who were making a contribution to the decisions to be taken on the future of the Greater Toronto Area.

In introducing Don Richmond, he noted that Richmond had worked in the federal, provincial and municipal orders of government. In the Ontario government, where he began his career in the 1950s, he had worked in the Department of Economics, where among other duties he wrote speeches for Premiers Frost and Robarts, he had been director of travel research and had been with the Ontario Economic Council, where he wrote short histories of economic and social policy in the province. In the federal government, Richmond had worked in the Special Planning Secretariat of the Cabinet Office on aspects of the "war on poverty" during Prime Minister Pearson's regime in the 1960s. Since the mid-1970s he has been with Metro Toronto, first as a policy researcher in the Chairman's office, and as head of Metro housing activities before his appointment as Commissioner of Community Services. Stevenson said that in all his capacities, Richmond had always managed to maintain a historical and philosophic perspective on his responsibilities, even when facing crises such as the current recession-produced escalation of social assistance needs in Metro.

Don Richmond introduced his remarks by saying that there is value in taking a historical perspective to avoid reinventing the wheel and to, one hopes, sort out where we are going.

He said that the issues involved in social welfare are a microcosm of the current constitutional debate. At each level of government social assistance now represents the largest single area of expenditure. If Canadians can sort out welfare issues, they should be able to deal with the future of the country.

How did we get into our current mess? He said that by explaining the origins of the current situation, we may be able to find solutions.

In the BNA Act, section 92 established the constitutional reality of provincial responsibility for health and welfare. This was logical in 1867, when Canada was a rural society and when local activities through parishes, churches and towns dealt effectively with social issues.

In the latter years of the 1800s, when the railways and rapid urbanization changed economic structures from local to regional, responsibilities for the delivery of social services remained at the local level. It was not until the depression of the 1930s that the system broke down. Municipalities could no longer handle the welfare load—twelve of the thirteen municipalities within the current area of Metro Toronto went bankrupt—so the province and the federal government had to step in. The Rowell-Sirois Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations made a number of recommendations dealing with social services, but the advent of the Second World War delayed much action. Two major events did take place during the war which fundamentally changed Canada's approach to social services: The establishment of a national unemployment insurance program made possible by a constitutional amendment, and the tax rental agreements, whereby the provinces gave up the prime sources of direct taxation to the federal government.

In the immediate post-war period the federal government was the dominant revenue collector, with 75 per cent of all government revenues. Richmond quoted Darcy McKeough to the effect that "the power to tax is the power to govern". The federal government's economic and social policy-makers in that period were convinced Keynesians, who were convinced that without federal social policy initiatives, such as baby bonuses, housing programs, old age security and early versions of medicare, the country was in danger of returning to the "dirty thirties".

The central provinces of Ontario and Quebec had a different post-war agenda. The Ontario governments under Drew and Frost were confident of the future and committed to growth. Their agenda was to expand Hydro into rural areas, to build roads and educational institutions and to make Ontario into a modern industrial competitor.

Social welfare discussions at the time in Ontario revolved around attempts to strike a deal with the federal government to find a point of responsibility for employables who had welfare needs and had a marginal attachment to the labour force. The province accepted a responsibility for those on categorical assistance (e.g., the blind and the disabled) and who were therefore out of the labour force. Because a deal was not reached on the "employables", responsibility for them was left to the municipalities.

Thus Ontario, along with Nova Scotia, was the only province that retained a welfare system with responsibilities split among the province, the municipalities and non-governmental agencies. Richmond said that with this fragmented system, welfare was never a high priority with post-war Conservative governments in Ontario. For years, he said, welfare payments as a provincial expenditure matched the revenues the province gained from LCBO profits!

The 1960s were years of unprecedented growth in the revenues of both the provincial and federal governments. In one decade a welfare state was virtually completed. By the end of the decade Canada had a much more complete welfare system than that attempted by the "Great Society" in the United States. The establishment of the CPP and QPP, medicare, the Canada Assistance Plan and the tax-sharing agreements amounted to a revolution in the financing of welfare programs. The system created in the 1960s, however, in which the federal government became the banker, was predicated on the ability of the federal government to fund the system.

In the 1970s the federal role remained that of a banker and to some extent a standard-setter. The Quebec government became the delivery agency for the social welfare system in that province. In Ontario an elaborate provincial-municipal system was developed with the province acting as a middleman and with many direct deliverers of services. Municipal capacity was strengthened and extended to include more community-based services. Housing, for example, moved from a public-housing approach to a non-profit system. A massive increase in expectations occurred, predicated on an infinite inflow of public money. The current Ontario welfare budget is the product of thousands of incremental decisions taken over the years in response to these pressures.

In the late 1970s and in the 1980s the federal government lost its capacity to be the banker for the system. Tax reform reduced federal revenue and the provinces emerged as the most important fiscal players. The federal government became a massive borrower and began to impose ceilings on programs over which it had no direct control.

Richmond said that today the federal government is almost bankrupt, the provinces are under tough fiscal constraints (Ontario represents the last of the Keynesians) and the municipalities are in a cost escalation squeeze. In Metro there are huge expenditure pressures from many agencies representing a society that has completely changed, largely through immigration.

Richmond said that we have a tradition of segregating services by race and religion. This means that new groups representing a huge

diversity of ethnic and racial groups are making "legitimate" demands to provide their own services. He said he does not know how governments can cope with these expectations. He said that it is very likely that there will be a contained fragmentation of service delivery within tightly constrained overall budgets. This will mean very difficult challenges for the allocation process.

He said that in Metro Toronto social assistance payments have tripled in the last five or six years. This is obviously unsustainable but it will be hard to control in a democratic, pluralist society.

Richmond said that an emerging view has been coming from the reports of the Social Assistance Review Committee, the Provincial-Municipal Social Services Review and the Hopcroft Committee on Provincial-Municipal Finance. These have suggested that the province should take over full funding responsibility for social assistance with the municipalities having the responsibility, along with other local agencies, for delivering specific social and community services. He cautioned that this would not necessarily save money for the municipalities but it would give them more control over the system.

He said that the Ontario government has been making the right kind of noises in principle but that the budget had not given much of a sign of movement in concrete terms towards a reformed system.

Richmond concluded his presentation by saying that he is encouraged that many people in the province and the municipalities are thinking about and working towards a better system in the future. The climate of restraint makes the sorting out of who should be doing what a difficult but not insurmountable task.

Discussion

The discussion began with a question as to whether it was possible to wait for evolutionary change to the system given the unsustainable rate of growth in demands for social assistance. Richmond said that no one level of government will be able to find solutions and they won't be found within three or four years. He said that Metro will not be able next year to dip into reserves as it did this year so the rate of increase in demand on the system is going to have to be cut right back.

Another participant said that he agreed with the assessment that we are in an impossible situation due to the rising expectations of ethnic and racial groups, women and "yuppies". He cited the Toronto School Board's activities that were leading to the expectation that all students

should go to university. He suggested that the norms of society must be transformed to emphasize the need for greater productivity.

Richmond commented that it is easy to get agreement on problems but that there is a real polarization around possible solutions. He said that Metro was at the cutting edge in the world on dealing with a multicultural society where demands are based on a concept of "rights". He said that solutions will have to come through a creative process of discovery—the old British tradition of "muddling through".

A questioner suggested that taxpayers were fed up with increases in property tax rates and that new sources of municipal revenue will have to be found. Richmond responded by saying that when he worked in the Metro chairman's office in 1973 real progress was being made nationally through the tripartite process towards matching revenue capacities and expenditure responsibilities among levels of government. He said the OPEC crisis and its impact on federal-provincial revenues and inflation moved the municipal financial issue to the bottom of the priority list of the provincial and federal governments—where it has stayed ever since. He said that municipalities were still making a case but that solutions would depend on appropriate timing.

Another questioner asked what the pragmatic possibilities were for an early change in provincial-municipal cost-sharing arrangements in the social services. In response Richmond said he thought that if the recession were over within the time frame indicated in the provincial budget, changes could occur during a possible second mandate of the current provincial government.

A participant said that the competitive situation required moves to create jobs if social assistance demands were to be reduced. Richmond responded by saying that the union movement, and therefore the government, was greatly concerned about job protection and creation and that attention will have to be paid to economic recovery.

A questioner asked Richmond to respond to the charges made by Dianne Francis in her newspaper columns about the degree of unfairness and cheating in the welfare system. Richmond said that there is a balance that has to be reached between total financial accountability and the quality of service that must be provided. He said that much of social assistance is based on the honour system wherein, for instance, a cheque can be produced in 24 hours to deal with an immediate need. If a system of complete checks were to be installed, given current lack of automation, the cheque could not be produced for two weeks and the need would not be met. He said that his staff has increased by 40 per cent to deal with the doubling of the load and there has been an increase in the verification

staff. He said the strategic decision that was made was to continue to respond to need, knowing that there would always be some cheaters.

A questioner asked about ways to deal with organized welfare cheating by recent immigrants and refugees. In response Richmond said that his department had finally succeeded in persuading the federal government to issue photo-identity cards to refugees, a measure that will make policing of "scams" somewhat easier.

Richmond was asked about the degree to which able-bodied welfare recipients could be matched to needed public works job requirements. Richmond replied that a case could be made for "work for welfare", but that it ran up against union opposition and against the current framework of Canada Assistance Plan funding. He said that there is no federal money available for job creation even though there is some for training. He said there is a desperate need to train many people with poor English or numeric skills who are now coming off UIC on to the welfare system. Otherwise, these people will not be qualified for jobs that will come available in the post-recession period. He said there are good basic skills programs available in the CAATs, but he cannot get welfare recipients into them. He said Hamilton had done a better job than Metro in making use of money from Canada Employment and Immigration.

A provincial government representative said that the province wants to move on disentanglement. He said that if the province were to take over full responsibility for social assistance, a way would have to be found to ensure that municipalities take over other community and social services. He said that provincial and municipal expenditures on social services have increased in recent years at the same rate—about nine per cent annually. He said that provincial social services legislation will be rewritten in about two years to reflect many discussions that have taken place with municipalities. He also said that it was important for local social service agencies to become more reflective of the communities they serve.

Richmond responded by saying that there have been a number of attempts to make local social service agencies more culturally diverse. He said that a typical situation has been that an advisory body gets established that does reflect the community but it then reports to the board of a long-standing agency that is still made up of representatives of establishment groups.

Dennis Flynn, councillor and former chairman of Metropolitan Toronto and a member of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Urban Institute, thanked Don Richmond in the name of all those present for a stimulating presentation.

5

The Future of the Greater Toronto Area: A View from Mississauga

A Presentation by Hazel McCallion, Mayor of Mississauga,
May 17, 1991

Richard Gilbert opened the fourth session of the Canadian Urban Institute's seminar series by expressing the hope that there would be a stimulating dialogue on the future of the Greater Toronto Area. He said the purpose of the breakfast seminars was to bring together people interested in urban issues with prominent speakers in an informal setting.

He then introduced Hazel McCallion as one of the most dynamic municipal leaders in Canada. He said she had been brought up in Quebec and entered municipal politics in Streetsville in the 1960s, becoming its mayor in 1969. With the creation of the Region of Peel, she became a councillor in Mississauga and its mayor since 1978. More than almost any other municipal politician in Ontario, he said, she embodies the municipality she serves. She has also been an active participant in municipal organizations both in Ontario and in Canada as a whole.

Hazel McCallion said that Richard Gilbert had been a great president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities at a time when she was on the executive. She said that it was better to have a councillor than a mayor as president of the FCM because the amount of time the job required could then be devoted to it.

She began her remarks by noting that there had been many provincial studies and reports over the years affecting the development of the Greater Toronto Area. The various regional governments, with the exception of Peel, which had reformed itself, have had external reviews of their structure. She said that she had made a submission on the need to plan Mississauga and Metro Toronto in tandem to the Robarts Commission on Metro Toronto in the 1970s.

She said that the creation of north-south regional governments in Peel and Halton had been a mistake because most interaction takes place on an east-west basis. In addition, the creation of regions around Metro Toronto had cut off necessary planning links between them and Metro. She said that prior to the creation of the region of Peel, for example, she

had been a member of the Metropolitan Toronto and Region Planning Board. She said that the natural linkages of Mississauga are with Metro Toronto to the east and Oakville and Hamilton to the west. They are not with Caledon, a rural area which would be better off tied in with Orangeville. She said that the creation of Peel had resulted in heavy subsidies from Mississauga to provide a level of services and infrastructure in Caledon higher than its residents probably wanted.

She said that taxpayers are angry at the amount of duplication involved in regional government. She said that in Peel the local governments have made some pragmatic accommodations to avoid costly duplication, at times in spite of the formal legal allocation of responsibilities between the region and the lower tier municipalities. In Peel, the local municipalities now handle both storm drainage and sanitary sewers. Mississauga is now proposing to take over regional roads so that there would be only two levels of government building and maintaining roads in the region: the province and the local municipality.

She said that when the Office of the Greater Toronto Area was established when John Sweeney was Minister of Municipal Affairs, she and Mississauga were very supportive, as it was time for a new vision for the overall region. She said she had had many meetings with Gardner Church stressing that Mississauga wanted to be part of the solution to the major issues in the GTA.

Mayor McCallion said that the province had failed its first big test in the GTA—the waste disposal issue—and that interest in the GTA exercise is declining. She said that until this issue is dealt with satisfactorily, she sees no further point in Mississauga participating in GTA negotiations or meetings on other issues. She said that on waste disposal, the province has intervened by press release—overturning solutions worked out by the municipalities and effectively taking over the responsibility. She added, however, that until provincial laws or regulations are changed the regional governments still have the legal power to act on waste disposal issues.

She outlined the steps taken by the various parties in the waste disposal issue. She said that a glorious opportunity to deal cooperatively with Metro's waste disposal situation had been squandered. The Britannia Road landfill site will soon be full leaving no place for future Mississauga garbage. Mississauga and Peel spent \$8 million on a search for a new site before picking a site in the City of Brampton. The previous Minister of Environment, Jim Bradley, had then told the municipalities to start their search over again and find a temporary site for the immediate problem. She said that current situation will require an expansion of the Britannia site without an appropriate environmental hearing because no time is

available for other solutions. She added that the lack of provincial assistance was compounded three weeks ago by a provincial edict that new waste incinerators would be banned and by the Minister of the Environment's statement that harmful incinerators had been introduced in Ontario by "sleight of hand". She said that in light of this Mississauga has asked the province to take over the responsibility for an already approved incineration plant in Peel. She added that Mississauga and Peel have already offered to look after the disposal of their own garbage.

She outlined some other priorities and issues she believes are important for the GTA. She said she was concerned about the possibility of a new provincial water and sewer corporation taking over from the efficiently operating regional system. She said it is important for a study to be done and released on the financial implications of proposed GTA plans. She would like to see a report on the financial status of all the municipalities in the GTA as she would like to know what financial state her potential partners are in—especially since Mississauga hasn't borrowed for thirteen years.

She said she believes GO Transit had been a very successful provincial venture and should be expanded. She is ready to see the proposed busway tying Mississauga into Halton and Metro turned over to a GTA-wide transportation authority.

She said that she believes strongly in the nodal approach to GTA planning, assuming that Mississauga would be a development node. She said that there is currently too much commercial concentration in downtown Toronto leading to too many commuters. She accepts the planning principle that people, as far as possible, should live and work in the same area. She said that Mississauga's current target is for a population of 700,000 with 23 million square feet of office space. Mississauga is now coping with the exciting challenge of building a city centre from scratch—something few municipalities have an opportunity to do.

She said that the GTA exercise is needed to plan transportation for the entire region, including Hamilton-Wentworth. She is concerned that the current Pearson airport expansion plans are now being made without a proper study of the potential for other airports such as Hamilton and Toronto Island to take some of the future load. Such a study should be a GTA responsibility as should the planning of other major infrastructure investments to serve the current and future population of the entire region.

Mayor McCallion said that a new level of government should not be created for the GTA but that a structure was needed to plan and coordinate region-wide activities. She said that a simplification of

government was necessary so people could relate more clearly to public authority. As it stands she said most people do not know the difference between local and regional responsibilities. She added that people in Mississauga know what is going on in Metro by reading the Toronto newspapers but that people in Metro do not know what is going on in Mississauga.

Mayor McCallion said there were some intergovernmental issues that might be tackled on a Greater Toronto Area basis because of the difficulties in arriving at a consensus across the province. She cited as an example the replacement of library grants by unconditional grants as a step towards provincial-municipal disentanglement. She used the welfare system as another area where disentanglement would lead to greater accountability. She argued that municipalities should never have had to deal with welfare bills for refugees—a subject over which they had no control.

She said that some provincial actions were exacerbated by the difficulty of achieving a coordinated approach between the regions and the area municipalities. One example she mentioned was the implementation of the Environmental Assessment Act which was causing great delays and cost increases to projects. Another was the question of lot levies where new provincial legislation could have been improved if the province and the GTA municipalities had worked together to get the bugs out of the system. She said Mississauga had done its homework on lot levies and could have proposed ways of avoiding current court challenges.

She said that Mississauga has the expertise to take over many responsibilities—both from the regional government and the province. She said the city was well managed, with \$120 million in reserves, very low recent tax increases and with a well-planned fiscal future. The city is in a position to make a constructive contribution to the planning, financial management and provision of services to the Greater Toronto Area.

In concluding her opening remarks, Mayor McCallion said that the Greater Toronto Area exercise was a great idea, which has gotten off the track. In light of the waste disposal experience, municipalities are now wondering what local responsibilities the province will take over next.

Discussion

The first question put to Mayor McCallion was whether her real objective was to abolish the region of Peel. She replied that there is far too much duplication, delay and confusion with two levels of municipal

government. She said it made no sense to have both regional and local roads. The city could easily take over social services and the garbage responsibility. The present split of responsibilities creates confusion as to which government has the responsibility for recycling. With two planning departments, conflicts are often a problem and delays result.

A participant suggested that without regional government, it would be more difficult to equalize standards of services. He said that cross-subsidies were even greater within Metro Toronto than in Peel, with, for example, Toronto contributing 43 per cent of school board tax revenues, but receiving only 28 per cent of school board expenditures. He suggested that the financial rationale in 1953 for creating Metro Toronto—equalizing services and building infrastructure in the suburbs—probably has no parallel in the 1990s. Mayor McCallion and the questioner agreed that it was important to know the distribution of costs and revenues when region-wide programs were discussed.

Another participant agreed that it was important for municipalities to have input into decisions on region-wide issues. He said the other side of the coin was that individual municipalities would have to give up some of their freedom of action in the interest of region-wide solutions. He said he was not sure whether Mayor McCallion accepted this. In reply the mayor said that the way the province has dealt with waste disposal and water and sewer issues has not led the municipalities to want to give up control. She said a successful example of a cooperative provincial-municipal solution, particularly on the garbage issue, would help give the municipalities the confidence to give up some of their freedom.

A participant agreed with the mayor's comments on regional government, suggesting that Hamilton-Wentworth should also be a single tier. He said that in the Hamilton area, the city and region have amalgamated planning and roads on an administrative basis and have therefore avoided duplication. Mayor McCallion said that there were some difficulties of moving to a single tier in both regions, given the link between Hamilton and Burlington and with Brampton on Mississauga's doorstep. She said that Caledon would probably be better off linked with Dufferin county.

A member of the audience suggested that it was vital for the future of the GTA for there to be better communication among municipalities within the GTA, which should include Hamilton, and between local politicians and outside experts in the region. He suggested that the Canadian Urban Institute (he was not connected with the Institute!) would be a logical body to perform this bridging and communications role.

In reply, the mayor agreed with the need for better communications and with the role a non-governmental body like the CUI could play in providing independent thinking, leadership and research. She warned that elected politicians would be reluctant to give up any authority and cited the failed attempt to establish a region-wide airport authority. She said that for a body such as the CUI to play a useful intermediate role, it would have to be recognized by the province as having status in the area. The questioner replied that good plans make good solutions and that decision-makers would collaborate around good proposals. He suggested that the CUI was in a good position to provide an informal forum in the GTA where good ideas could be presented and discussed. Mayor McCallion repeated that more than an informal structure was needed to get governments to collaborate. She suggested that the province set up a provincial authority to handle region-wide transit.

Another participant suggested that there should be a single regional government for the GTA, with the current regions abolished. The mayor said this could make sense, because there are now unnecessary conflicts among regions.

A participant suggested that before any decisions are taken on new structures, it would be important to have a review of their potential revenue base. This would imply going through an exercise in provincial-municipal disentanglement and obtaining the recommendations of the province's fair tax commission, before looking at structures.

A questioner asked if the mayor thought the province would likely create new special purpose bodies, given the large number of cabinet ministers who have come from interest group organizations. In reply, Mayor McCallion said that this was already happening. She said she was concerned that the proposed water and sewer corporation would undermine municipal accountability. She added that Mississauga would like to assume full responsibility for libraries from the library board. In general, she said local government was being eroded by special purpose bodies.

A participant suggested that with the advent of direct election to the regional level in Metro Toronto in 1988, conflicts between area municipalities and the regional level seem to have grown. He asked if this conflict or competition would be exacerbated if there were a single larger region. In reply, Mayor McCallion said that there would have to be a very clear definition of responsibilities from the outset with the region having only a small staff and dealing with only big region-wide issues. She said that a lack of precise definitions of responsibility at the outset had led to some of the current duplication between regions and area municipalities.

A participant noted that urban development in Mississauga is very important for the GTA because of the city's aim of providing around 100,000 new jobs over the next decade.

In reply Mayor McCallion said that Mississauga was planning on a population target of 700,000 with employment of 600,000. She said that the city had recently convened an economic "think tank" which reached a remarkable degree of consensus on economic development priorities among municipal, business and labour leaders. She suggested this as a model for the rest of the GTA, saying that in Mississauga developers were now talking to labour leaders.

A participant said that the province is setting up three new consultant studies on landfill sites in the GTA. He suggested that the government might be better off to read old reports on the subject which were still relevant. He added that perhaps it would make more sense to eliminate the area municipalities than the regions if the aim was to eliminate duplication. Mayor McCallion, in reply, said this would be the wrong way to go. She said that many of our current problems arose from the fact that the federal government, the province and the regions are too far from the people. People don't know who their M.P.'s, M.P.P.'s or regional or school board representatives are and therefore don't know how to deal with their institutions. She said governments need to be more concerned with people and communicating directly with them. She said that her mayor's committee of citizens had arrived at a consensus that Canada was overgoverned, overtaxed and overregulated.

A participant suggested that a reason for maintaining library boards was to resist the pressure for censorship which could come from local politicians if they were directly responsible for the libraries. Mayor McCallion responded that municipal councils could in effect censor libraries by cutting off funding. She said that in the current system Mississauga has a \$15 million library budget that cannot be adequately administered by a voluntary board and as a result there is no effective control over the chief librarian. She said that Mississauga believes in libraries and had just opened a new \$30 million library. She added that Mississauga now provides labour relations, purchasing and maintenance for the library board but that for proper accountability, the library system should be an integral part of the municipal corporation. She scoffed at the idea that censorship should be a major concern at the end of the twentieth century.

Don Stevenson of the Canadian Urban Institute thanked Mayor McCallion for her dynamic presentation and the constructive ideas and suggestions she had implanted among the participants.

6 Quebec's New Approach to Provincial-Municipal Relations

A Presentation by Robert Cournoyer, Director of Policy and Research, Quebec Ministry of Municipal Affairs, May 31, 1991

Richard Gilbert welcomed participants to the fifth session of the Canadian Urban Institute's seminar series. He said that after four speakers from the Toronto region, the Institute had decided to bring two speakers from the province of Quebec where a provincial-municipal "disentanglement" exercise was taking place—a term that was now being discussed in Ontario.

In introducing Robert Cournoyer, he noted that Florent Gagné, the deputy minister of Municipal Affairs of Quebec, had been unable to come because his minister, the Hon. Claude Ryan, had asked him to accompany him to hearings of a Quebec National Assembly committee that day where a number of mayors were saying what they thought of the Quebec government's new approach to municipalities. He added that Robert Cournoyer could not have been a better substitute, because he is not only "the institutional memory" of the Quebec Ministry of Municipal Affairs, but is also the Quebec official who knows most about urban issues in the rest of the country.

Gilbert said that Cournoyer was a Montrealer who did his university work in Montreal and Chicago in urban sociology, demography and economics. He worked for two periods for the Canadian Council for Urban Research, as a researcher and then as executive director from 1972 to 1976. He also worked for the Canada Council and the Privy Council Office in Ottawa. Cournoyer has been with the Quebec Ministry of Municipal Affairs since 1976, and since 1979 director of policy and research. In this capacity he had done much of the work for two major reforms of provincial-municipal relations in Quebec—in 1980 and in 1990-91.

Robert Cournoyer opened his remarks by saying that Quebec's new "approach" to provincial-municipal relations was not viewed by all as just an "approach". To many it was a "shock", to others "Ryan's reform", and to others a "counter-reformation". He said that only time would tell how long-lasting the changes would be. The reform is

essentially a proposal, yet to be finally adopted, to reduce or eliminate a number of specific provincial-municipal transfers, while at the same time providing some additional potential sources for municipal revenues.

He went through some of the reasons for the new approach, saying that it did not represent a precise long-term plan, with clearly articulated objectives. Nevertheless, it did represent an attempt to find a new provincial-municipal distribution of responsibilities. He said that the final policies were the result of many discussions between civil servants and politicians and within the cabinet itself, where arguments were almost as fierce as with the opposition. He said that one-third of the submissions to the Belanger-Campeau Commission on the future of Quebec made reference to the distribution of government responsibilities within Quebec. It was clear that if Quebec were to assume more powers, the people of Quebec wanted more decentralization of powers within the province.

At this point Cournoyer made reference to two documents which were distributed to the participants:

- ◆ a statement by Claude Ryan, Minister of Municipal Affairs, of December 14, 1990 entitled "Toward a New Balance: A Sharing of Responsibilities Between Québec and the Municipalities" (much of which Cournoyer said had been written by the minister himself!) and
- ◆ a press release (in French) of May 14, 1991, announcing changes to the initial policy declaration, including some reductions in the originally-announced cuts in transfers to the municipalities.

Cournoyer said that the immediate reasons for the new policy were financial and philosophical. The budget deficit of the Quebec government had led the province to "unload" some of its financial responsibilities on the municipalities. Philosophically, the policy was designed to lead to more efficient government, closer to the people and with a smaller number of instances where one level of government spent money coming, along with conditions, from another level of government.

Cournoyer said that there were three aspects of decentralization: the power to make decisions, the power to manage programs, and the responsibility to finance programs. He said that the traditional municipal position dealt with the first two aspects only. The Quebec government was now saying that there would be further decentralization of power but that the municipalities would have to take greater responsibility for raising revenues. Cournoyer noted that some political leaders in the province

strongly believe in the principle of decentralization of responsibility. Others support the policy primarily for budgetary reasons.

Cournoyer then sketched some of the historical developments of the 1980s that had led to the current situation. First he described the reform of 1980 which gave much more flexibility to local governments in Quebec. It resulted in a 10 per cent increase in the tax base of municipalities by providing additional tax room of \$350 million on a local tax base of \$3.5 billion. This was achieved by the province taking over 96 per cent of local education costs. Cournoyer said that a number of Quebec provincial politicians have always believed that the 1980 reforms were too generous to the municipalities.

He said that during the 1980s there had been a trend in Quebec to involve the municipalities in more provincial decisions affecting them but not to devolve authority down. The recession of 1981-82 and the current downturn both have had the impact of reducing the provincial capacity to increase transfers to municipalities.

During the 1980s in Quebec the main public policy debate has been about less government and more decentralization. Cournoyer said that this tendency was reinforced by the strong business influence in the Liberal government elected in 1985. He referred to the three business-government task force reports of 1986 and particularly the one chaired by Paul Gobeil, then chairman of the Treasury Board, on improving the efficiency of government. Only some of the formal recommendations of the report were implemented but the pervading spirit of a smaller and less intrusive government has lived on.

Cournoyer then referred more specifically to the current Quebec policy on provincial-municipal relations. He said that draft legislation—which the government still describes as a proposal—is going through hearings of a committee of the National Assembly. The municipal reaction to date has been anger at what they have termed a unilateral action to cut financial transfers. The two Quebec municipal associations—urban and rural—have opposed the policy, have organized a press campaign against it and have boycotted the Assembly hearings. A group of over 500 mayors have marched in protest to the National Assembly.

In spite of these protests, Cournoyer said that there have been formal meetings between the Minister of Municipal Affairs and municipal leaders, as well as many private discussions over the last three months. The criticisms of the proposal aired in these meetings led to a number of refinements to the proposal that were announced in the press release of May 14. As a result, the net cut in transfers from the province to the municipalities was reduced from \$477 million in the December 1990

statement to \$334 million in the May statement, on a municipal expenditure base of about \$6 billion. In addition the potential increase in municipal own-source revenues was increased from \$63 million in December '90 almost \$98 million in the May statement.

Cournoyer briefly went through the specific elements of the Quebec policy proposal. The most important element is the virtual elimination of subsidies for municipal transit operations—an annual reduction of over \$220 million. The May changes provide for a \$30 a year increase in car registration fees in census metropolitan areas served by public transit, for a total of \$50 million, which municipalities can use to offset transit operating deficits. Cournoyer said the government had decided on this increase to car registration fees as a means of financing transit operations after having reviewed a number of other possible revenue measures, such as a tax on second cars in the household or a special tax on luxury automobiles. The government decided on cutting provincial grants for transit operations in part because over the 1980s, both the user and the municipal share of operational expenses had been declining while the provincial share rose. The government policy stated that as a matter of efficiency, it would be better for financial responsibility for operations to essentially be shared between the users and the level of government responsible for operational decisions—i.e. the municipality.

The new policy also proposes to reduce sharply provincial grants for local and rural roads and to charge municipalities for a portion of the cost of policing services hitherto provided free by the Quebec provincial police (le Sureté du Québec). As a result of a study of practices in other provinces, Quebec will reduce its grants in lieu of taxes to municipalities in respect of provincial education and health institutions. The municipalities will be permitted to raise more money from land transfer taxes and will be provided with more revenues from the proceeds of an increased schedule of highway traffic fines. Cournoyer noted that there will be a short-term phase-in of the proposed changes and adjustments to provincial- municipal equalization program in order to avoid severe financial shocks for individual municipalities.

Cournoyer concluded his remarks by saying that the introduction of the new policy has caused at least a short-term set-back to harmonious provincial-municipal relations in Quebec. Some of this may have been due to an announcement so soon after the change of ministers in the autumn. Cournoyer added that the proposed reforms cannot properly be evaluated until there has been an opportunity to see if there is an impact on municipal services.

Discussion

The first question addressed to the speaker was whether the report on disentanglement and decentralization done by Jacques Parizeau for the Union of Quebec Municipalities had had an impact on the government approach. The questioner asked if the common thread in the two reports did not also mean that Quebec municipalities supported the general decentralist philosophy of the government report.

Cournoyer responded by saying that Jacques Parizeau, now leader of the opposition in Quebec, may be regretting the study he did for the Union of Quebec Municipalities at a time when he was out of politics. His report is now being quoted back at him by the government in support of its current policy. Cournoyer added that the recommendations of the final Parizeau report were much more conservative than the very decentralist preamble. The municipalities never did accept all the specifics of the Parizeau report.

The questioner followed up by asking what the speaker thought Quebec municipalities really wanted. Cournoyer said that the formal positions of the associations and the speeches of municipal leaders are in favour of more responsibilities and more financial resources. He could not say how widely this opinion is shared across the spectrum of municipalities in the province. He added that a number of newspaper editorials have suggested that the municipalities are getting what they want from the province.

Another participant asked what the average property tax load was on Quebec taxpayers. Cournoyer responded by saying that one of the strongest arguments used by the Quebec government in support of its policy was a comparison with Ontario. He said that the tax load on Quebec provincial taxpayers was 11 per cent higher than in Ontario while the load on municipal taxpayers was 18 per cent lower. As a result the provincial government argued that provincial taxes should be lower and local taxes higher. The big difference is that in Quebec only 7 or 8 per cent of education costs are picked up by local taxpayers. He said that overall he thought that property taxes were about 20 to 30 per cent lower than in Ontario and were very low in rural areas.

Another participant commented that asking municipalities what they want is like asking women. They are all different. She went on to say that the current Quebec policy is similar to what U.S. state government did beginning in the 1890s. The cutbacks at that time led to a poor level of urban services in many U.S. municipalities throughout the twentieth century. She said that the impact will depend on the distribution

of transfer cuts among municipalities but she had heard that there are already cuts to service levels in Montreal.

Cournoyer said that so far transfer cuts have affected larger municipalities more severely than smaller municipalities, partly because the smaller centres have done a better lobbying job. This, however, raises the whole question of the municipal structure in Quebec. He said that there were some 1500 municipalities in Quebec, many very small. Although regional governments have been established in Quebec, there has been no restructuring of municipalities within or around the Montreal Urban Community. It has proven very difficult to get a joint approach by municipalities in the Montreal area, largely because the suburban municipalities have not taken a regional view. The attachment of Quebecers to their local municipality has been so strong that Quebec governments have created second tier regional governments without any restructuring at the lower tier. He said that some problems are beginning to become acute in large urban areas that could be dealt with more effectively with restructuring. The political reality is that there is no popular pressure for restructuring.

Two of the participants said they had been in Quebec at the time of the Belanger-Campeau hearings and had been impressed by the views expressed in favour of more decentralization within Quebec. One of the two asked what role the Ministry of Municipal Affairs will be taking in the studies of the costs and benefits of Quebec sovereignty.

Cournoyer said that there is a high level committee inside the Quebec government on regional issues of which Municipal Affairs is a part. Municipal Affairs has been pressing for models in which locally-elected people would have greater responsibilities for regional development. He said that it is difficult to persuade a number of ministries to accept greater local involvement in their programs. The ministries normally want to retain the power and the local visibility that comes from giving out grants. On the other hand Cournoyer said that too many municipalities still see the province as a "Santa Claus" dispensing gifts. He said that the Parti Québécois government had promoted a series of regional economic summits to develop regional economic plans with local input. The Liberal government concluded that this approach was too ponderous. Something will have to be established now, however, to meet the expectations for more regional responsibility that were aroused during the Belanger- Campeau process.

A participant asked if the government was contemplating treating the city of Montreal as a special case, to which might be devolved more authority than other municipalities, as was already the case with some social assistance programs.

Cournoyer said that when the Montreal Citizens' Movement was in opposition, it had pushed for much greater responsibilities for the city in the field of health and social services. Since the party has been in power in Montreal, it has been quiet on the issue. He said that Montreal now has somewhat more responsibility than other Quebec municipalities. Its formal position now is that it wants an equivalent transfer of fiscal capacity for any transfer of powers.

Cournoyer was asked for more information on the provincial share of municipal capital expenditures for transit and how the province anticipates the municipalities will respond to cuts in transit operating grants.

Cournoyer replied that the province will continue to pay 100 per cent of the costs of subway construction and 75 per cent of the capital costs of other forms of urban transit. This is done through a debt retirement system whereby the municipalities borrow money and the province subsidizes interest costs. He repeated that the province used to pay 30 - 36 per cent of operating transit costs which will drop to zero. It will be up to municipalities how they respond. The province has suggested that municipalities may want to levy a special tax on city parking.

Cournoyer was asked how priorities were arrived at for spending on regional infrastructure projects and what roles there might be for regional planning bodies.

Cournoyer replied that in the Montreal area at least, there were too many local government structures. The result has been that the Ministry of Transport has often had the final say on regional development priorities and infrastructure. The fact that it has paid 100 per cent of the capital costs of subways has given it a large voice in location decisions.

Don Stevenson of The Canadian Urban Institute thanked the speaker for his thorough and frank presentation of recent changes in Quebec. He said that a municipal councillor had whispered to him that she had received a most enlightening course in how provincial decisions are made from the speaker.

7

Montreal Faces its Challenges

A Presentation by Serge Carreau, Associate Director of
Housing and Urban Development, City of Montreal, June 21,
1991

Richard Gilbert opened the sixth session of the Canadian Urban Institute breakfast series by saying that since the fifth session had been addressed by a senior official of the provincial government of Québec, it was appropriate that the sixth session have a representative of the city of Montreal as speaker.

He then introduced Serge Carreau, associate director of Housing and Urban Development of Montreal. He said that Carreau was an architect, trained originally in Montreal who had done graduate studies in housing and urban planning at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm. Carreau had been a professor of architecture for more than ten years at the University of Montreal and for four years was director of the school of architecture. After the Québec election of 1976, he spent six years as vice-chairman of the Québec Housing Corporation. From 1984 to 1987 he was assistant director of the City of Montreal's Economic Development Commission. He then became director of housing for the city before assuming his current post in March 1990, which includes responsibility for urban planning in Montreal.

Serge Carreau opened his remarks by saying that he would speak on the challenges facing Montreal and the plans of the Doré administration for dealing with them. He also circulated to the participants copies of the master development plan adopted in October 1990 for the Ville-Marie (downtown) district of Montreal.

Carreau said he had been lucky in working with new governments with new ideas both at the provincial and city level. He left the academic world in 1977 to try to develop an overall provincial housing policy. He said it never really succeeded because the province and the major municipalities never seemed to be on the same policy wavelength. The PQ government under René Lévesque tried to push the city of Montreal under Jean Drapeau into developing a city housing policy. These attempts

were never really successful because social policy was never a high priority with the Drapeau regime.

Nevertheless a housing action program was undertaken by the early 1980s with a target of 20,000 new housing units and more cooperative housing. He said that whatever was achieved in housing in the central of Montreal in the Drapeau era was because of pressures from the federal and provincial governments. Most housing development in the Drapeau years was in the suburbs of Montreal.

Carreau said that the priorities of the Drapeau regime were mega-projects like Expo 67, the Olympics, expressways and the Metro. There was no concern about the daily life of the city or its neighbourhoods. The regime was characterized by piecemeal decisions made by two or three people, the mayor and one or two of his closest advisors. When Carreau joined the city administration, he was told not to bother about citizen consultation or cooperative housing. The prevailing concept of the environmental context was a narrow one, restricted to the physical environment. Under Drapeau there had been one attempt at long-term planning called "Visions 2000". It had never been acted on and by the early 1980s, over a decade after it was prepared, copies were very difficult to find.

Carreau said that with the election of Mayor Doré and the Montreal Citizens' Movement a number of important changes took place. They included:

- ◆ An opening up of council activities and decision-making.
- ◆ A large amount of public and neighbourhood consultation.
- ◆ A total reconstruction of civic departments and decision-making processes (Carreau added that there had probably been too much structural change because some good institutions were thrown out with the bad)
- ◆ A much greater concern about social issues and probably not enough concern about economic development.

Carreau then enumerated some of the accomplishments of the first four years of the Doré regime. He began by describing the complex consultation process which involved three approaches:

First, a set of sectoral advisory boards were set up for such themes as social development, economic development and housing. These boards deal with issues they raise themselves and act as a review process for

proposals coming from the civic administration. No changes to municipal regulations can be made without recommendations and advice from these advisory boards. Carreau said this has added to the time taken before decisions are made and has made life more difficult for city bureaucrats.

Second, nine district or neighbourhood advisory committees have been established to deal with local issues. These committees hold neighbourhood meetings to which city officials make presentations;

Third, a consultation bureau has been established on larger issues involving a longer time span. This bureau reports directly to the executive committee of the council.

Carreau said that these new consultation processes have increased the interest of Montrealers in civic affairs. They are also not without problems. Many of the sectoral and broader consultations have been controlled by too few people—especially those activists with a connection to the Montreal Citizens' Movement (on very local issues, on the other hand, there has been a tremendous increase in local involvement). Carreau said the MCM may be in trouble in the next municipal election unless much more action than has been the situation to date results from these time-consuming consultations.

Carreau went on to say that the Doré regime has embarked on a number of sectoral initiatives and plans. The first sectoral policy approved was on housing. The second was on local economic development. The next sectoral policies to go before council for approval will be on social development, transportation and overall economic development.

Carreau then turned to urban planning. He said the overall city plan was scheduled to go through the approval process in 1992. In the meantime, the master plan for the downtown area (which had been distributed to the participants) had been approved in October 1990.

He said that the downtown plan is a resolution of council that does not provide specific development rights. It sets out planning objectives, planning principles and overall standards in areas such as land use and building heights.

The process leading to the preparation of the downtown plan started as a result of recommendations from the Montreal economic summit of 1986. Work began on a preliminary version early in 1987 with a series of consultations to set out critical issues and options. The results of these sessions were fed into the skeleton of a new plan which was presented in February 1989. In April 1990 the preliminary plan was

discussed at a forum of 600 leaders of many sectors of society. This forum gave the planners a better sense of the feasibility of the proposals and led to a number of revisions being made in May and June.

The advisory committee for the plan then held fifteen sessions on the concrete details of the plan, during which they were exposed to heavy lobbying from developers, heritage groups and other interested parties. Some compromises were arrived at during these sessions which also resulted in some downzoning, reduced building heights and increased provisions for building preservation.

Carreau said there were three main achievements of the downtown planning process:

- ◆ The large number of people involved in the process means that there is much stronger public commitment to the future of the downtown.
- ◆ For the first time there is a clear direction to builders, who had asked for an overall vision with assurances that there would not be constant changes, as had been the case in the past.
- ◆ The needless destruction of heritage buildings will now be stopped.

In concluding his presentation, Carreau set out several challenges for the Doré administration:

- ◆ The necessity to produce concrete results from the planning and consultation processes.
- ◆ Streamlining the approvals process. Builders are now frustrated by its slowness.
- ◆ Dealing with a difficult fiscal situation Montreal will lose \$100 million next year as a result of Bill 145 which cuts provincial transfers for transit operations.
- ◆ Dealing with serious social problems (Montreal has 40 per cent of Quebec social assistance recipients—although the province pays). Many people in need come in from the suburbs to use city facilities.
- ◆ Developing a better balancing between the city and the suburbs in planning and urban development. He said there has been too much relative support by the province for

suburban development and urban sprawl. There needs to be at least 10,000 new housing units in downtown Montreal.

Discussion

The discussion began by a questioner asking what moves were taking place to coordinate activities in the overall Montreal region. Carreau responded by saying that the only formal structure was an administrative committee to coordinate transit in the region. He said the Montreal Urban Community only covered municipalities on Montreal Island. He added that Laval, to the north of Montreal Island, has strong representation in the provincial government and has been the object of some provincial favouritism. He cited as an example that Montreal's sewage treatment plants could easily treat Laval's sewage but that the province had instead funded a separate Laval plant. He suggested that provincial transportation capital funding had been directed more to internal Laval needs than region-wide transit requirements.

Carreau was then asked about the impact on Montreal of recent Quebec government policy decisions on provincial-municipal transfers. He replied that the impact would be more severe in Montreal than anywhere else in the province, that tax rates would have to rise more in Montreal than in the suburbs and that the quality of the transit system may suffer. The questioner noted that transit was a responsibility of the Montreal Urban Community but Carreau responded that Montreal represented 70 per cent of MUC financing.

A questioner asked if Montreal could not make up some of its transfer loss by taxing parking lots. Carreau said that although the new law would allow such a tax, the city would probably not impose it unless the suburbs did too for fear of losing development to the suburbs. He said the suburbs were not likely to tax parking, because they did not rely so much on transit. Carreau said that Montreal's position was in favour of a more general tax on car licences with proceeds to the municipality—something the new provincial legislation allows in part.

A questioner asked if Montreal had a specific policy on multiculturalism and whether this had been part of the consultations on the master plan. Carreau said that although Montreal receives 90 per cent of immigrants to Quebec, the multicultural aspect had not been a formal part of the planning consultation. He did say that there had been many consultations with different ethnic communities on housing and social issues. The city has set up a multicultural office and has adopted an affirmative action housing policy. The Montreal civic administration at

one time was almost exclusively francophone. Now the city staff includes representatives of many ethnic communities speaking many languages.

Carreau was asked about the priority for different types of housing in the city's housing policy. He replied by saying the city has piggy-backed on a provincial program of credits for first-time buyers of houses worth less than \$150,000. The program had problems at the outset but has had better results this year.

A participant asked about the airport authority and whether it was a unique example of a region-wide activity. Carreau said that this was a successful example of a new regional activity, along with the regional transit body. He said that the airport authority had already solved some difficulties on the relative roles of Dorval, Mirabel and St. Hubert airports. It has the capacity to get groups together to work for increased competitiveness for the Montreal region.

A questioner expressed concern about the possible deterioration of the city core as a result of the social welfare burden and the transit problems. He asked if the downtown plan had addressed these problems. Carreau said that while the downtown plan fixes some urban parameters, it cannot deal with other important issues. He said that an overall city strategic plan will have to deal with longer-term issues. There needs to be a better regional approach, especially in view of current fiscal pressures and a continuing migration to the suburbs.

Carreau was asked about the relative emphasis in housing policy between private and non-profit housing. He said that as a general target he believed that 25 per cent of the housing mix should be socially-assisted. He said there was no real need to produce new social housing because there now is a five per cent vacancy rate. What is needed is a system of income supplements for those who need them. He said 40 per cent of social housing is sponsored by the city, although private developers do the actual building. The city makes public land available to builders for social housing.

A questioner asked Carreau for his views on Toronto-Montreal collaboration. Carreau said there were already a series of very good exchanges in the planning and housing areas and that the two mayors were in regular consultation. He said he thought there should be more exchanges between universities and other professionals on urban issues.

He was then asked if we thought Toronto and Montreal had more in common with each other than each had with the rest of their respective provinces. Carreau replied that there were many common issues and many common ways of doing things. He said because of their regular

meetings he finds it very easy to call the housing or planning commissioners of Toronto and discuss issues that are much more similar than those of Quebec City or Halifax. He said there are a number of new issues like the environment or the replacement of infrastructure where profitable collaboration is possible.

On this note, Don Stevenson of the Canadian Urban Institute thanked the speaker for the thoroughness of his presentation. He said that the Canadian Urban Institute was committed to assisting with the enlargement of areas for Montreal-Toronto collaboration.



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